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SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (02/18): The investigation into
Hamas leader Mahmoud al-Mabhouh's murder in Dubai continues to
dominate local press coverage

Main Stories:

For the third consecutive day, the investigation into the
assassination of Hamas leader Mahmoud al-Mabhouh was front page news
in the dailies. The lead stories report that Mossad was behind the
attack and is being criticized for their "mistakes" (referring to
using the identities of people residing in Israel to carry-out the
assassination). Headlines report that the British Foreign Minister
summoned the Israeli Ambassador to discuss Mossad using forged
British passports. British Prime Minister Gordon Brown promised an
investigation into the matter. Ma'an highlights on its homepage news
that the operation was run out of Austria.

The dailies also reported on various stories relating to the U.S.
Al-Quds reports that "appointing an American Ambassador in Damascus
is a result of the 'convergence' between the U.S. and Syria."
Representative William Delahunt of Massachusetts is quoted in
Al-Ayyam and Al-Hayat Al-Jadida saying "[Israeli Deputy Foreign
Minister] Ayalon insulted the representatives of the American people
when he refused to meet us in Jerusalem" in response to Ayalon
refusing to meet with a Congressional delegation visiting Israel
sponsored by the lobbying firm J Street. A headline in Al-Ayyam
quotes Secretary Clinton saying "the U.S. does not intend to attack
Iran." However, Ma'an highlights on its homepage a quote from the
Russian Chief of Staff saying that the U.S. may attack Iran.

Al-Quds highlights the conclusion of a visit to Gaza by MPs from 17
Arab states. The headline quotes the head of the delegation saying
that they "made serious and honest efforts to end the division." An

Al-Quds headline also highlights Fatah and Hamas PLC members in Gaza assuring that the reconciliation plan will be signed soon. An Al-Ayyam headline says that Hamas will release 20 Fatah prisoners. However, a report in Al-Hayat Al-Jadida quotes Fatah spokesperson Al-Za'reer saying that the announcement to release Fatah prisoners is just a "cosmetic move."

BLOCK QUOTE:

Ali Al-Khalili opines in Al-Ayyam under the title "The American Disappointment" saying: "Secretary Clinton said in Qatar that she, President Obama, and Special Envoy Mitchell are disappointed in the absence of progress in peace talks between Palestinians and Israelis...there is a disappointment indeed. It's a Palestinian disappointment in the U.S. position after President Obama's promises of change [a new beginning]. Arabs and Palestinians welcomed these promises hoping for freedom and justice. The change was nothing but more support for the Israeli position, like previous U.S. presidents."

RUBINSTEIN